

REDACTED

# Apex Chat Reveals Business Connections with La Fortaleza, Senate

They kept in touch with the government while talking about canceling the \$38 million order

Ayeza Díaz Rolón, The Weekly Journal May 20, 2020 0



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The chat between the owner of Apex General Contractors, Robert Rodríguez, and his alleged lawyer, Juan Maldonado, shows that both maintained contact with Alex López—legislative adviser to Gov. Wanda Vázquez—and with Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz, while the P.R. Department of Health was preparing to cancel the purchase of a million tests of COVID-19 for \$38 million.

The 72-page message excerpt was released Monday to the House of Representatives Health Committee during a closed-door hearing on the issue of the failed purchase of coronavirus tests.

In a message dating April 1, Rodríguez shares a photo in which he discussed the purchase cancellation with Oriental Bank staff and a warning that was allegedly given "to those in charge of the media (in the bank )."

Afterward, Rodríguez asked Maldonado if he knew López, the governor's advisor, and he replied "No."

"They are going to get us in contact," Rodríguez added.

Shortly thereafter, Rodríguez wrote Maldonado: "Tommy (Rivera Schatz) asks who canceled the order. Urgent."

"Mariel Rivera from [the Health Department] and Yara Torres from Nmead (Bureau of Emergency Management and Disaster Administration)," Maldonado replied.

"Ok", Rodríguez said.

The message exchange that mentions both officials is found on pages 25 and 26.



Asustados

Hablaste con el abogado?

Call

Lic. Alex Lopez  
Asesor de la Gobernadora

Lo conoces?

Questioned "Lo conoces?"

Nope

Nos van a poner en contacto.

*Screenshot where Gov. Wanda Vázquez's adviser is mentioned.*

That same day, they also commented on a press conference in which Health Secretary Lorenzo González participated and on whom they commented that he "looked good".

"And if he doesn't take my contract away, I think he looks better," Maldonado said.

The rest of the messages feature Maldonado and Rodríguez celebrating over the multimillion-dollar transaction and comments on what was being discussed in the media on the subject.

The government announced on April 16 that it canceled Maldonado's contracts. He served as executive director of the Maritime Transportation Authority (ATM by its Spanish initials).

The House of Representatives anticipated that it will summon the governor's adviser and another Senate employee identified as Willie Vega behind closed doors.

However, **THE WEEKLY JOURNAL**'s sources coincided that Rodríguez testified before the House on Monday's hearing regarding a phone call in which Vega reportedly had a teleconference with Rivera Schatz to discuss the \$38 million ordeal and its cancelation.

Moreover, Rodríguez reportedly denied to the representatives that Gov. Vázquez had canceled the Apex contracts, as was claimed at a press conference on April 16.

To date, no date has been offered for the next hearing that the committee will hold behind closed doors with officials from La Fortaleza and the Senate.

## Rivera Schatz Reacts

The Senate president used his social media accounts to chastise local media after the disclosure of the chat that features his name.

Rivera Schatz denounced "some press sectors want to link selectively and VICIOUSLY certain figures with the issue of the investigation on the COVID-19 tests."

[pic.twitter.com/qeMBJJCey8](https://pic.twitter.com/qeMBJJCey8)

— Thomas Rivera Schatz (@trschatz51) May 20, 2020

"I have said on several occasions that in addition to the House of Representatives, it is alleged that the FBI and the Bureau of Special Investigations (NIE) are investigating. ALL authorities must know who called who sent "texts" [sic.]; who intervened and who did not," he said.

**Read the exchange below:**

[Download PDF](#)

**Odette Ortiz**

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**From:** Lcdo. Juan Acevedo  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 12, 2020 1:22 PM  
**To:** Odette Ortiz  
**Subject:** FW: ROBERT RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ  
**Attachments:** TEXT #1 ORIENTAL BANK & LORENZO GONZALEZ.pdf; TEXT #2 MESSAGES JUAN MALDONADO.pdf; TEXT WHATSAPP JUAN MALDONADO.pdf

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